

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A vehicle steering apparatus comprising:

a housing for supporting, coaxially to a steering shaft, ~~[[and]]~~ a rotating cylinder by a thrust bearing, said rotating cylinder being provided with a screw mechanism constructed between said rotating cylinder and said steering shaft for moving in an axial direction for the purpose of steering and being rotated by a transmission from a steering motor, said housing being constructed in a separated form having first and second housings, ~~said first and second housings being fit to each other by a spigot joint fitting on an outer side of a retaining part of a thrust bearing for thrust supporting said rotating cylinder,~~

wherein the first housing is provided with a fitting part, and the second housing is provided with a retaining part, said retaining part having a first portion whose diameter is smaller than a diameter of a second portion thereof which secures concentricity of the first and second housing, and being configured to be fitted to the fitting part of the first housing by spigot-joint fitting;

wherein an interior surface of the fitting part is radially spaced from an exterior surface of the first portion of the retaining part, said interior surface of the fitting part and said exterior surface of the first portion of the retaining part together defining an absorbing gap,

wherein a fixing nut is configured to be screwed into an interior surface of the retaining part in order to apply a tightening force on said thrust bearing from one side thereof, and said absorbing gap is configured to absorb an increase in an outer diameter of the first portion of the retaining part when the fixing nut is tightened into an interior surface of the first portion of the retaining part, and

wherein the retaining part has a first portion whose diameter is smaller than a diameter of a second portion thereof which secures concentricity of the first and second housing, thereby providing a first gap, and the first gap is provided in a part that constitutes a part of the spigot-joint fitting part of said first and second housings and that is located radially outward from a fixing nut screwed into said retaining part in order to apply a tightening force on said thrust bearing from one side, and

wherein said first absorbing gap substantially overlaps, in the axial direction, with a screwing region between said retaining part and said fixing nut screwed into said retaining part; and
~~wherein said fixing nut is in direct contact with said thrust bearing, said first gap is larger than a second gap on a part of the spigot joint fitting part where said first gap is not provided, and the first gap is provided adjacent to the second gap in the axial direction, and~~
~~within said first gap, an increase in an outer diameter of the retaining part caused when the fixing nut is tightened is absorbed.~~

2. (Previously Presented) The vehicle steering apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said screw mechanism is a ball screw mechanism and said ball screw mechanism is constructed such that a screw groove formed in an outer periphery of said steering shaft is engaged with a screw groove formed in an inner periphery of said rotating cylinder via a large number of balls.

3. (Previously Presented) The vehicle steering apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising an escape stopping ring, said escape stopping ring being in contact with an end face of said fixing nut from an opposite side of said thrust bearing.

4. (Original) The vehicle steering apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said thrust bearing is a twin angular contact ball bearing having a common outer race tightened by said fixing nut.

5. (Original) The vehicle steering apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said thrust bearing is a shield bearing provided with a shield member on both sides of rolling elements.

6. (Original) The vehicle steering apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said rotating cylinder has, in an outer periphery, a gear wheel that engages with a pinion of an output shaft of said steering motor.

7. (Original) The vehicle steering apparatus according to claim 6, wherein said gear wheel has resin gear teeth.

8. (Canceled)

9. (Currently Amended) The vehicle steering apparatus according to claim 1, wherein a substantial amount of said first absorbing gap overlaps, in the axial direction, with is located directly above the screwing region between said retaining part and said fixing nut screwed into said retaining part, and an axial length of said absorbing gap substantially equals to an axial length of sad screwing region.